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Multi-stakeholder dialogue

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

The United Nations Forum on Forests recognizes the value of and encourages the active participation of major groups, as identified in Agenda 21, in the Forum sessions and intersessional meetings in promoting sustainable forest management. The following major groups were identified in Agenda 21: (a) business and industry; (b) children and youth; (c) farmers; (d) indigenous peoples; (e) local authorities; (f) non-governmental organizations; (g) the scientific and technological community; (h) women; and (i) workers and trade unions. From its inception, the Forum has been very participatory in its working modalities and has consistently encouraged the participation of forest-related organizations belonging to those major groups in the multi-stakeholder dialogue of the Forum. Pursuant to United Nations Forum on Forests resolutions 1/1 and 7/1, a multi-stakeholder dialogue is held as an ongoing component of every Forum session in accordance with the provisions of the Economic and Social Council and the relevant rules of procedure. It should be noted that the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests, adopted by the Forum and the Economic and Social Council in 2007, specifically called for active and effective participation by major groups in the work of the Forum.

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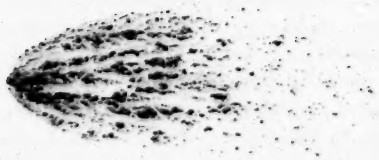
At the tenth session of the Forum, in April 2013, the multi-stakeholder dialogue will be held during the first week of the session, during which representatives of the major groups will share their perspectives on issues related to sustainable forest management, including its financing, the implementation of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests and the achievement of the four global objectives on forests, in the context of the main theme of the session, "Forests and economic development". It should be noted that the focal points of the seven participating major groups have demonstrated remarkable coordination. Their joint discussion paper for the session will be issued in an addendum to the present note.

The present note gives an account of relevant developments since the ninth session of the Forum and offers a number of measures that the Forum may wish to consider in order to continue to enhance the substantive contributions of major groups to its discussions.



I. Introduction

1. The major groups identified in Agenda 21 have been some of the key constituents of the Forum. The major groups identified are as follows: (a) business and industry; (b) children and youth; (c) farmers; (d) indigenous peoples; (e) local authorities; (f) non-governmental organizations; (g) the scientific and technological community; (h) women; and (i) workers and trade unions. The Forum has recognized the role and contributions of the forest-related organizations under those major groups in implementing sustainable forest management. It has consistently promoted stakeholder participation in its work and has incorporated interactive multi-stakeholder dialogues during its sessions. In order to facilitate the multi-stakeholder dialogue process, major group networks have nominated focal points to assist with the coordination of inputs from the various networks.

2. During intersessional periods, the Forum secretariat works in close collaboration and cooperation with major group focal points to coordinate and plan for the next multi-stakeholder dialogue and to enhance their participation in accordance with the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council. Accordingly, the Forum secretariat facilitates consultations among the focal points of each group[1] to plan and prepare for the multi-stakeholder dialogue. The format and content of the dialogue are proposed by the focal points, in consultation with the Forum secretariat, to the Bureau of the Forum for consideration.

3. As was the practice during previous sessions, the present note has been prepared to facilitate the multi-stakeholder dialogue, to be held during the tenth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests.

II. Enhancing stakeholder participation in the work of the Forum

4. The effective participation of stakeholders is critical to the success of the Forum in its pursuit of sustainable forest management. During the intersessional period, representatives of major groups participated and contributed significantly to a number of Forum-related meetings and activities. They participated in the four workshops organized by the Forum secretariat on facilitating finance for small island developing States and low forest cover countries, held in Tehran (November 2011), Niamey (January 2012), Port of Spain (April 2012) and Suva (July 2012). They also actively participated in initiatives in support of the Forum, namely, the country-led initiatives entitled "Contributions of forests to a green economy: exchange ideas and experiences concerning the roles of forests and sustainable forest management for developing a green economy" (Bonn, Germany, October 2011), "A pathway to a green economy in the context of sustainable development: focus on the role of markets in the promotion of sustainable forest management" (Hanoi, January 2012) and "The Lviv Forum on Forests in a Green Economy: actions and challenges for the countries of Eastern Europe and Northern and Central Asia" (Lviv, Ukraine, September 2012); and the Collaborative Partnership on

[1] A complete list of the focal points of major groups is available from www.un.org/esa/forests/contacts-major_groups.html.

Forests Organization-Led Initiative on Forest Financing in support of the United Nations Forum on Forests (Rome, September 2012).

5. Finally, the major group representatives participated in and contributed to the second meeting of the Open-ended Intergovernmental Ad Hoc Expert Group on Forest Financing, convened from 14 to 18 January 2013 in Vienna. Their proposals and comments on various issues under consideration were submitted for discussion in an open and participatory manner alongside those of the experts.

III. Multi-stakeholder dialogue at the tenth session of the Forum

6. The active involvement of major groups in the multi-stakeholder dialogue is important in ensuring that discussions at the tenth session reflect a diverse range of views and concerns. The dialogue process encourages the balanced participation of stakeholders from major groups and different regions of the world and has proved to be a unique opportunity for forest-relevant stakeholders to contribute meaningfully to the discussions on the Forum's main themes, enriching the process through a diversity of perspectives provided through case study experiences and lessons learned on issues related to sustainable forest management, including its financing, and the implementation of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests.

7. Preparations for the multi-stakeholder dialogue have been made in cooperation with network organizations of seven major groups: (a) children and youth; (b) non-governmental organizations; (c) indigenous peoples; (d) scientific and technical communities; (e) women; (f) farmers and small forest landowners; and (g) forest workers and major trade unions. Unfortunately, two major groups, namely, business and industry and local authorities, will not be represented in the dialogue.

8. The focal points of the participating major groups have decided to produce a single joint discussion paper on forests and economic development, which is the major theme of the tenth session. This is a unique and encouraging development and is expected to provide a more focused and stronger basis for an informed and engaging dialogue between the major groups, Member States and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests member organizations. In the past, the major groups presented separate discussion papers with individual group perspectives on issues related to the themes of the sessions. In 2011, for the first time, major groups decided to produce only three focused discussion papers related to different themes of the session. The single joint discussion paper will form the basis of the dialogue during the current session. The dialogue will be held on the first week of the tenth session and will provide major group representatives the opportunity to present their priority areas and the recommendations set out in their paper on forests and economic development and engage in interactive policy discussions with the representatives of Member States and Collaborative Partnership on Forests member organizations. The representatives of the major groups will also be invited to present their views and comments throughout the discussions during the Forum session.

IV. Conclusions

9. The Forum has a tradition of openness and transparency in its working modalities, providing ample opportunities for stakeholders to participate actively and present their perspectives on different aspects of sustainable forest management policy and practices. The multi-stakeholder dialogue is one such vehicle for meaningful civil society participation. Other equally important means of active engagement of major groups include close collaboration and consultation between the Forum secretariat and the focal points of major groups and the participation of representatives of major groups in Forum-related intersessional activities. Considering that forest and human issues intersect at many levels, the multi-stakeholder dialogue and other activities should be maintained and enhanced in the future work of the Forum.

10. In this regard, the Forum may wish to consider approaches to strengthen the engagement and encourage the participation of all stakeholders, including those that at present are not actively engaged in the Forum process, in particular forest-related organizations in business and industry and academia and local authorities.